The House Sitter

by BryceT

Recently, the movie "Housesitter" was aired on TBS. During the movie, an uninvited woman creates havoc by moving into an architect's empty house, and buys time by telling his neighbors that she is his wife. Many times, Hollywood is fantasy. They took what could have been a vandal or live-in transient, and dressed up the situation for comedy. The real life house sitter exists to provide security and maintenance while the homeowner is away.

I provide house sitting service to a couple of people, but it is not always possible for me to be at the house 24/7 for weeks or months on end. I may need to visit a customer or take a quick trip out of town. But what if something tragic happens while I'm away? I would hate to experience the shock when returning. I want to see what's happening live, and here's where technology comes in handy!

Just before I was to start a three-month house sitting, a customer of mine had been experiencing alarm trips at his office. He wanted to remotely monitor his business, so that he could look from his house to see if anyone entered the premises, should his burglar alarm notify him of a breach. He found an easy do-it-yourself-install product called LukWerks. The system impressed me, so I bought myself a starter kit to take along to my next house sitting.

LukWerks (www.wilife.com) is an easy-to-setup and easy-to-use surveillance system specifically designed for homes and small businesses. For basic operation, all the system needs is an existing computer, an electrical outlet for the camera, and 15 minutes to set up. The LukWerks digital video surveillance system allows me to self-monitor the house through intelligent cameras, its powerful software, and - since the house already has a high-speed Internet connection - mobile access anywhere and anytime.

The system (pictured above: indoor system) is cost-effective, PC-based, and some models are considered professional-grade. As standard features, it enables remote viewing, digital motion-based recording, and e-mail notification of motion-triggered events detected by cameras. LukWerks allows you to monitor your business or home remotely from a mobile device - including Windows Mobile phones and wireless handheld devices - and record all motion-based activity.

What is nice about the LukWerks cameras is they provide high-quality video images and have powerful processors that provide digital motion detection, real-time Windows Media Video (WMV) encoding, and dynamic image quality processing. Currently available styles include indoor, outdoor, and a spy camera. The standard indoor camera can free stand or be suction cupped to a window to look outside the premises. The weather-proof outdoor camera can provide coverage of parking lots, driveways, entrances, and backyards. The spy camera (pictured below) masquerades as a sleek, fully functioning digital clock - perfect for coverage of any area of the home or small business that requires discreet observance.

The LukWerks' easy-to-use software system manages the surveillance network, displaying full-motion video from up to six concurrent cameras while simultaneously recording any motion or scheduled events. It also provides user definable e-mail and cell phone alerts, disk management and video footage security.

With traditional camera systems, dedicated wiring is needed wherever a camera is located. But with LukWerks' PowerLine networking, the cameras connect to the system by simply plugging a camera into any standard electrical outlet. LukWerks then transmits the video over the existing electrical wires to the PC, thus eliminating the headaches of running new wires to a central system or configuring wireless networks. Moreover, sending video through the power line is more reliable, stable, and secure than traditional wireless networks provide. Finally, since power outlets are readily available in homes and businesses, video surveillance coverage is much greater than less dependable wireless alternatives, providing an easier and more reliable way to set up and use a surveillance system.

Pricing and Ordering Information: Starter Kit: $299, or $329 for spy. Each Additional Camera: $229 for indoor or outdoor, $249 for spy camera

Customers can order at http://net-master.rite2u.com or by calling 559-432-TECH

In general, video surveillance systems are commonly used for surveillance of a small business, securing/monitoring a first or second home or properties, checking in on loved ones, monitoring pets, or watching children. The LukWerks cameras have a flashing light that can be disabled, but the flashing light by itself can be a crime deterrent. I usually have the system setup at my house. During the times when I am house sitting, I temporarily take along the camera and electrical receiver. If I want to check and make sure the house is OK, I log in at http://www.wilife.com and view the camera's real-time video. The system has been extremely beneficial for my sense of security, helping me sleep better at night.

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Roxanne Foster
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The Living Room

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